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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-second session
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement*/ submitted by the International League for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 July 2000]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

1. Six million Tibetans have faced more than 40 years of military occupation and colonial rule by the People's Republic of China. The persistent human rights violations suffered by the Tibetan people merit the Sub-Commission's full attention.

2. Today, there are more than 600 Tibetan political prisoners, according to Tibet Information Network. The incommunicado detention of 10-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Eleventh Panchen Lama, the world's youngest political prisoner, remains a serious concern. Beijing refuses to provide any information on his whereabouts to anyone. Last November, a Chinese language website published an article suggesting that the body of a young boy resembling Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was secretly cremated by members of the Armed Police Force on 19 October 1999. The Chinese authorities denied the report but it has raised anxiety among Tibetans about the boy's safety.

3. Chinese authorities have made conditions intolerable for the free practice of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1998, a senior Tibetan religious figure and member of the Committee of the National Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and its Standing Committee, Agya Lobsang Thubten Gyurme Gyatso, defected to the United States of America. In testimony before the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, the 49-year-old Tibetan lama explained the reasons for his departure.

> "Had I remained in Tibet I would have been forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and my religion and to serve the Chinese Government. This meant also my personal beliefs. As abbot of Kumbum Monastery, I would have been forced to help the government have its choice of Panchen Lama accepted by the Tibetan people. This would violate my deepest beliefs. It was at this point that I knew I must leave my country. So in the end I chose to follow my teacher's guidance. He had advised me that when I turned fifty years old I should leave political life and concentrate on my religious studies. The only possible way I could follow his advice was to escape from what had become almost total Chinese control over my life."

4. Monks and nuns are being coerced to affirm that "Tibet is a part of China" and to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In 1999, the Chinese authorities also imposed harsher measures to prevent Tibetans from celebrating even the Birthday of the Dalai Lama. For example, the Lhasa city authorities held a rally to commend officials on the handling of "Trung Lha Yarsol" rituals (referring to the Dalai Lama's Birthday). A statement issued on 14 July 1999 even claimed that the birthday rituals also undermined tourism: "The Trung Lha Yarsol' practice is causing immense harm to the creation of a favourable image of Lhasa city. .... It also coincides with the vital tourist season when our guests from abroad as well as from within the country start arriving into Lhasa. Practices like throwing 'tsampa' flour at a passer-by, and blocking the path of travelers, constitute anti-social behaviour that undermines the image and reputation of the city."

5. Tibetans also face serious discrimination. Most skilled jobs are held by Chinese settlers while Tibetans perform most of the menial labour. The rate of unemployment among Tibetan youth is increasing at an alarming rate.

6. Prostitution is on the rise among young Tibetan girls. A recent report, "Social Evils" by Tibet Information Network, found that the total number of brothels in Lhasa municipality is approximately 1,000. In addition, "bars, restaurants, clubs and karaoke bars are often full of girls openly offering their services on the premises, many of which have back rooms where the prostitutes can take their clients."

7. In education, illiteracy remains high despite claims by Chinese authorities to having achieved "earthshaking progress." A 1997 study by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and

Democracy found that 96% of Tibetan refugee children interviewed had fled Tibet for reasons of education, generally under the most hazardous conditions and at great financial and personal cost to their family. 93% of these children did not receive any education on Tibetan culture. In addition, efforts started in the early 1980s to reinstate Tibetan as the official language have recently been described by officials in Lhasa as 'not working and at a stalemate'.

8. Chinese authorities signed the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights. This has not, however, improved the human rights situation in Tibet. China must now ratify the two Covenants, without further delay, and take concrete steps to improving conditions on the ground.

9. We do welcome recent invitations by Chinese authorities to for foreign delegations, including UN human rights officials, to visit Tibet. We are hopeful that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will soon receive signatures to the Memorandum Of Understanding as a follow-up to the Memorandum Of Intent which was signed in 1998. Meanwhile, we hope that the Special Rapporteur on Torture will be given full and free access during his official mission to China and Tibet, where torture of political prisoners remains endemic. Similarly, we urge Chinese officials to invite the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance to conduct a follow-up mission to China and Tibet. China must, however, provide independent access to foreign delegations wishing to observe the situation in Tibet. We also express deep concern over China's policy of preventing human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists from visiting Tibet.

10. In conclusion, we appeal to the Sub-Commission to closely monitor the human rights situation in Tibet and to take appropriate concrete measures to end the human rights violations in Tibet.